



## Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe

Volume 41  
Issue 4 *Ukrainian Protestants*

Article 10

5-2021

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Oksana Salata  
*Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University*

Karen Nikiforov  
*Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University*

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#### Recommended Citation

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# **ADVENTISTS AND PENTECOSTALS OF DONETSK REGION IN THE LATE SOVIET ERA: BETWEEN THE SCYLLA OF LEGALIZATION AND THE CHARYBDIS OF OPPOSITION**

**By Oksana Salata and Karen Nikiforov**

**Oksana Salata**, Doctor of Historical Science, Head of the Department of History of Ukraine, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Professor. Research interests: History of the USSR, Information Policy, History of Arts. E-mail: o.salata@kubg.edu.ua

**Karen Nikiforov**, PhD student of the Department of History of Ukraine, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Consultant of Member of Parliament. Research interests: History of the USSR, History of Religion, Soviet Everyday Life. E-mail: karen.nikiforov@ukr.net

## **Abstract**

The article describes religious policy of the Soviet government concerning the Protestant communities on the basis of archival materials. Two different models of Soviet policy in the field of religion are analyzed, using the activities of the Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs in the Donetsk region in relation to Pentecostals and Adventists as an example. Ukrainian SSR was the "Bible belt" of the Soviet Union. Donetsk region was characterized by high percentage of Protestant communities in general and Adventist communities in particular. Most of the Adventist communities in the region were officially registered, and their members did not show significant dissident inclinations. Therefore, the case of Adventists serves as an example of the more tolerant Soviet religious policy, far from the usual stereotypes about repression and atheism. A slightly harsher attitude by the Soviet authorities can be observed towards the Pentecostal community. After the events of 1945, when the Soviet government forced Pentecostals and Baptists to unite, all Pentecostal communities automatically joined the ranks of opposition. Still, during 1965-1991, some registered Pentecostals made contact with the Soviet authorities. Unregistered communities remained a big problem for the Commissioner and were persecuted until liberalization of religious policy in the late 1980s. The authors pay particular attention to the examples of the way Pentecostal and Adventist regional leaders balanced the necessity to maintain friendly relationship with the authorities and the desire to worship God. It was this kind of controversy that became the main issue of the activities of Protestant religious organizations in the late USSR.

## **Introduction**

In the context of the religious history of the Soviet Union, the Donetsk region is an area of particular research interest due to its religious diversity and politically turbulent

nature. Moreover, since 1960s the Donetsk region remains the most populated region of Ukraine.

Religious organizations in the Soviet Union experienced several waves of repression and persecution: from physical destruction of clergy and religious buildings in the 1920s and 1930s to bans on the revival of religious life in the 1950s and 1960s. Since 1965 Soviet religious policy shifted from outright oppression of religious organizations toward attempts to legalize the Church in exchange for its loyalty to Soviet government.

For a long time both Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian historical and religious literature portrayed the Council for Religious Affairs exclusively as a governing body that limited and inhibited religious life in the USSR in every possible way. In the case of Donetsk we can see that the regional Commissioner for Religious Affairs often acted not only as an enforcer of atheistic policy, but also defended the rights of believers under Soviet law. It sought registration for religious communities and controlled the interaction of local authorities with the believers.

Thus, the main function of the Commissioners of Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR in the period from 1965-1991 was to control the religious situation in the regions, which required overseeing the activities of religious organizations and communities, the promotion of atheism among the population, the registration and liquidation of religious communities, etc.

Relations of the Commissioner for Religious Affairs with small religious communities of the region deserve particular attention. The specific confessional strategy of the Soviet government aimed at the Russian Orthodox Church also applied to Orthodox believers of the Donetsk region. The Baptists were also traditionally active, which caused special attention to them on the part of the commissioner, Communist Party, and state bodies.

However, in the religious life of the Donetsk region the extremely interesting cases of Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and Evangelical Pentecostal Christian communities can be observed, representing two diametrically opposed approaches of the Council Commissioner towards interaction with religious organizations.

### **Seventh Day Adventists and the Commissioner**

Seventh-day Adventist activities in USSR during this time were generally legal. Only the Reform Adventist communities remained unregistered and persecuted. However, they did not exist in the Donetsk region. The number of Seventh Day Adventists in Ukraine equals

45% of their total number in the USSR.<sup>1</sup> In the Donetsk region, the number of Adventist communities was statistically average (for example, as of 1967, six out of 136 Adventist communities in Ukraine resided in the Donetsk region). Representatives of SDA communities often faced issues connected with community registration during period of Stagnation (1965-1985). However, Adventists of the Donetsk region did not face resistance from the Commissioner concerning registration of their communities. For example, a 63-member SDA community was registered in 1971 in Horlivka in the Donetsk region thanks to the efforts of the city council and the Commissioner for Religious Affairs, Hryhorii Homlia. This community remained unregistered for five years. Yet another indicative example is the case of Ilovaisk community, which included sixteen people, but an inspection conducted in 1975 found out that the community was virtually inactive, so the commissioner proposed to liquidate it.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1.**  
**Yearly number of registered (unregistered) Seventh-day Adventist religious organizations in the Donetsk region**

1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1974	1980	1982	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
5 (1)	5 (1)	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

Apart from the issue of registration of unregistered communities, the domestic aspects of Seventh-day Adventist life related to the peculiarities of their doctrine gained importance at the time. In 1968, the secretary of the primary communist party organization of the school №13 in Khartsyzsk, Mr. Levchenko, sent a letter to the Chairperson of the Council for Religions under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Vasiliy Kuroyedov, asking him to clarify the legitimacy of the actions of Adventist parents, who had not allowed their children to go to school on Saturday. With the help of the legal adviser of the Ministry of Education,

<sup>1</sup> Петро Бондарчук. *Адвентисти сьомого дня в рядянській Україні (середина 1940-х – середина 1980-х років)*. (Україна ХХ століття: культура, ідеологія, політика. 2019. 24), с. 291. [Petro Bondarchuk, *Seventh Day Adventists in Soviet Ukraine (mid-1940 – mid 1980)* (Ukraine in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Culture, Ideology, Politics. 2019. 24), p. 291].

<sup>2</sup> Центральний державний архів вищих органів влади та управління України (далі – ЦДАВО), Фонд Р-4648, Опис 7, Справа 5. Інформації уповноважених о наявності и деятельности находившихся вне регистрации религиозных объединений пятидесятников, СцЕхб, иеговистов и мелких сектантских течений за 1975 год. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, Fond R-4648, Inventory 7, Unit 5. Information of the Commissioner about the presence and activity of religious associations of Pentecostals, Baptists, Jehovah's Witnesses and small sectarian movements that were not registered for 1975].

Mr. Khodarchenko, the Donetsk regional Commissioner Mr. Homlia ruled that the actions of such parents were illegal, citing regulations in the field of education.<sup>3</sup>

However, the key issue for the Seventh Day Adventists was the creation of their own religious center. According to the Ukrainian researcher, Viktor Voynalovych, local religious commissioners and local Soviet officials were beginning to raise the issue of restoration of the SDA spiritual center, which would coordinate activities of individual communities, preachers, and elders, and control the "unhealthy moods" that started to manifest in Adventist communities.<sup>4</sup> In his reply, dated June 8, 1967, the Chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs of the USSR, Vasiliy Kuroyedov, wrote: "Taking into account all of the above, as well as the fact that the restoration of a religious center may create a precedent for such actions by religious associations of other cults (Jews, Mennonites, Pentecostals, etc.) The Council for Religions Affairs believes that the petition for the restoration of the All-Union Council of SDA should be postponed."<sup>5</sup> Despite these concerns, the issue of uniting disparate Protestant communities remained relevant during the 1970s. On May 14, 1976, a senior preacher of the Adventist community, Rev. Prolinskiy, visited the Commissioner. Rev. Prolinsky presented a telegram from Mikhail Kulakov (a senior Adventist preacher from the Tula region, Russian FSSR) in which he was invited to arrive in Moscow on May 17 to discuss the possibility of uniting the Pentecostals under the leadership of Rev. Parasey and Rev. Zhukalyuk. On May 24, 1976, upon his return, Rev. Prolinskiy visited the Council's Commissioner and informed him on the results of the trip. According to the presbyter, Donetsk or Odesa was considered as the meeting location, but eventually Kyiv was chosen, so that after the meeting the Council could hold a conversation with all the participants of the meeting.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.Р-4648, оп.5, спр.47. Заявления и жалобы верующих о возобновлении деятельности церквей и молитвенных домов, снятых с регистрации религиозных общин, как распавшихся и переписка по их рассмотрению с Уполномоченным Совета по Донецкой области за 1968 год. Том IV. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.5, U. 47. Statements and complaints of believers about the resumption of the activity of churches and houses of prayer, removed from the registration of religious communities as disintegrated, and correspondence on their consideration with the Commissioner of the Council for the Donetsk region in 1968. Volume IV].

<sup>4</sup> Віктор Войналович. *Партійно-державна політика щодо релігій та релігійних інституцій в Україні 1940-1960-х років: політологічний дискурс: монографія*. (Київ: Світогляд, 2005) [Viktor Voynalovych. *Party-state Policy on Religions and Religious Institutions in Ukraine in 1940-1960: Political Discourse: monograph*. (Kyiv: Svithlad, 2005)].

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.Р-4648, оп.7, спр.24. Информации, докладные записки, справки уполномоченных Совета о деятельности зарегистрированных религиозных обществ, о процессах и явлениях, происходивших в религиозных объединениях Рпц, старообрядческой, католической и реформатской церквей, иудейской религии, Асд за 1976 г. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.7, U.24. Information, memoranda, certificates of the Commissioner of the Council on the activities of

As a token of gratitude for the lack of oppression from the authorities, some active Adventists tried to assist them with identifying the sources of opposition among communities. For example, in 1974 the Commissioner's office was visited by the presbyter of the Adventist religious community, Rev. Prolinskiy. In a "confidential conversation" Rev. Prolinskiy told Commissioner Homlia about the plans of the Moscow Adventists to hold an All-Union meeting of preachers of the SDA in Kyiv. Its organizers stated that a member of the Council for Religious Affairs, Mr. Tarasov, approved such a meeting. At the same time, according to Rev. Prolinsky, the meeting could lead to deepening of the schism amongst the Adventist community.<sup>7</sup>

On December 2, 1975, a conversation took place in the office of the Commissioner, involving the senior preacher of the region, Rev. Prolinskiy, who returned from Boyarka (Kyiv region), where he and a pastor from Donetsk, Rev. Katsel, with thirteen other leaders of the Adventist movement in Ukraine, attended an all-Ukrainian meeting of Adventist preachers. Rev. Prolinskiy expressed doubts about the legitimacy of this meeting due to the absence of representatives of the "other side" at the meeting, which probably meant Adventist reformists. On December 9, 1975, Rev. Prolinskiy visited the office of the Commissioner again. He said that the Commissioner of the Voroshilovgrad (now Luhansk) region visited the Adventist prayer house in Voroshilovgrad and informed the community leadership that the institution of regional seniors had been established. He added that the authorities would recommend him for this position. Rev. Prolinsky argued that such actions were aimed at compromising the Commissioner.<sup>8</sup>

Cooperation of the presbytery of SDA of Donetsk region, represented by Rev. Prolinsky, with state authorities, represented by the commissioner, also manifested itself in Rev. Prolinsky's open support for the first Soviet legislative initiatives. For example, Rev. Prolinsky positively assessed the "Regulations on Religious Associations in the USSR"

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registered religious societies, on the processes and phenomena that took place in the religious associations of the Russian Orthodox Church, Old Believer, Catholic and Reformed churches, Jewish religion, SDA for 1976].

<sup>7</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.Р-4648, оп.5, спр.398. Документы о деятельности и положении религиозных обществ адвентистов седьмого дня на территории Украинской ССР (информации, справки, докладные записки, сведения) за 1974 год [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.5, U.398. Documents on the activities and status of the Seventh-day Adventist religious communities on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR (information, references, memoranda, information) for 1974].

<sup>8</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.Р-4648, оп.7, спр.9. Докладные записки, справки работников аппарата Совета о результатах изучения религиозной обстановки в областях и проверке работы уполномоченных Совета [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.7, U.9. Memorandums, certificates of the Council staff on the results of studying the religious situation in the regions and checking the work of the Council Commissioners].

dated 1977, and, upon his own initiative, personally reproduced the provisions on a typewriter and distributed them among the other five presbyters of the regional SDA.<sup>9</sup>

The draft of the 1977 Constitution of the USSR was fully approved by the presbyter of the religious community of the SDA of the village of Novoignatyivka, Rev. Katsel, and the community's believers, as it guarantees freedom of conscience in the country. The pastor positively perceived Article 41 of the draft ("*Citizens have the right to rest*") and expressed satisfaction with the fact that the Constitution defined Saturday as the day of rest, which corresponded with the teachings of Adventism.<sup>10</sup>

### **Relationship between the Soviet Authorities and Pentecostals.**

The period of deepening crisis in the Soviet command-and-control system of 1960-1980 was marked by radical changes for Christians in the Evangelical Pentecostal faith (CEE). As early as 1945, the so-called "Moscow Agreements" were adopted between the associations of the Baptists and Pentecostals communities upon the implicit initiative of the Soviet authorities. According to the Agreements, the religious communities merged into a single community; or rather, the Pentecostals were forced to merge into Baptist communities. Further process of unification was very slow and difficult. However, it continued until the late 1980's. For example, in 1973 deputy senior presbyter of the Baptists in Ukraine, Mr. Glukhovsky analyzed the state of unification of Baptist and Pentecostal communities and found out that the unification process was much faster in the western regions of Ukraine than in the east, where most Protestants communities were not aware about the Moscow Agreements. He also noted that in the previously united communities the Baptists condoned attacks on the Pentecostals.<sup>11</sup>

For a long time, the Soviet government waged a discrediting campaign against the way of life of the Pentecostals, subjected members of the Pentecostal communities to public persecution, to which the Pentecostals reacted in a rather unusual way, by developing

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<sup>9</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.4648, оп.7, спр.49. Информации, докладные записки, справки уполномоченных Совета о деятельности зарегистрированных религиозных объединений, о процессах и явлениях, происходивших в религиозных объединениях ЕХБ, пятидесятников за 1977 г., арк.15 [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.7, U.49. Information, memoranda, certificates of representatives of the Council on the activities of registered religious associations, on the processes and phenomena that took place in the religious associations of the ECB, Pentecostals in 1977, Fol.15].

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Fol.96.

<sup>11</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.Р-4648, оп.7, спр.370. Информации, докладные записки и справки областных уполномоченных Совета о религиозной обстановке, процессах и явлениях, происходящих в религиозных организациях за 1974 год. Том I., арк.40. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.7, U.370. Information, memoranda and certificates of regional commissioners of the Council on the religious situation, processes and phenomena occurring in religious organizations in 1974. Volume I., Fol.40].

emigration sentiments. Ukrainian researcher Viktor Yelenski noted, that such sentiments turned out to be quite unexpected for the KGB.<sup>12</sup>

Presence of emigration sentiments among the Pentecostals in Ukraine was stated in a memorandum addressed to the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukrainian SSR, Volodymyr Shcherbytskiy, dated October 10, 1977, by the Secretary of the Central Committee, Valentyn Malanchuk, and the head of the Central Committee, Yuriy Yelchenko. They noted that 324 families (1,562 people), including 27 families from the Donetsk region (130 people), applied for emigration, citing religious reasons.<sup>13</sup> In 1977 Commissioner Homla conducted a meeting with the elders of the Baptist communities of the region. During the conversation, they also discussed the issues related to the desire of some Pentecostals to emigrate. The organizer of the group of Pentecostals of Hirnyk town, Rev. Voronin, expressed his opinion on this issue. He noted that he did not perceive such actions as inappropriate, referring to emigration policy of the Bolshevik government in the days of Lenin's rule.<sup>14</sup> Let us assume that in this formulation and reference to the "great Ilyich," Rev. Voronin used the well-known method of justifying his ideas in the Soviet scientific community through literal implementation of Soviet ideology, thus making it meaningless. A similar technique (in its application in the scientific community) was described by a prominent Soviet archaeologist Lev Klein. Professor Klein noted that "if we continuously and persistently present some qualities as "ours," socialist, Russian, even though in fact we do not possess these qualities and these postulates are far from being realized, scientific administration finds itself in an awkward position: it has to take measures, to somehow meet the stated qualities and postulates."<sup>15</sup>

However, it should be noted that in the 1970s, despite the legal impact of the Moscow Agreements, Pentecostals were able to register their own communities. Over the next two decades an active process of registration of Pentecostal communities took place in many administrative and territorial units of the USSR (including the Donetsk region). It should be

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<sup>12</sup> Віктор Єленський. *Велике повернення: релігія у глобальній політиці та міжнародних відносинах кінця XX – початку XXI століття*. (Львів: Видавництво Українського католицького університету, 2013), С.327 [Viktor Yelenski. *The Great Return: Religion in Global Politics and International Relations in the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries*. (Lviv: Ukrainian Catholic University Publishing House 2013), p. 327].

<sup>13</sup> Войналович, с.523. [Voynalovich, p.523]

<sup>14</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.4648, оп.7, спр.49., арк.7. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.7, U.49., Fol.7].

<sup>15</sup> Лев Клейн. "Лукавый талмудизм: 12 приемов, которые помогали советским ученым обойти цензуру», *Theory&practice*», <https://theoryandpractice.ru/posts/15743-imitatsiya-marksizma-12-priemov-kotorye-pomogali-sovetskim-uchenym-oboyti-tsenzuru>, 02/21/2021 [Lev Klein. *Crafty Talmudism: 12 Techniques That Helped Soviet Scientists Bypass Censorship*)]



noted that as of 1975, according to the Donetsk regional Commissioner, up to 978 Pentecostals resided in the region.<sup>16</sup>

It is worth noting that despite many years of struggle against the Pentecostal underground, for the most part the process of registration in the region was quick and unproblematic. For example, the decision to register the first community of Pentecostals in Lavyansk (50 people) was made without any delay,<sup>17</sup> as well as next year's decision concerning the Proletarian district of Donetsk (150 people).<sup>18</sup>

However, nonconformist opposition also existed among the Pentecostals, which was concentrated mainly in Kyiv, but also had an impact on regional communities, including Donetsk. For example, the Pentecostal community of Makeyevka, numbering 80 people, agreed to register in 1980. However, after the leaders of the opposition Pentecostal movement, Mr. Ivanov and Mr. Levchuk, arrived from the Ukrainian capital and met with activists of the Pentecostal community in Makiivka, such as Nesteruk, Gorbachev, and Lutsenko, the Makeyevka group agreed to register only after recognizing it as a separate religious center.<sup>19</sup> A small group of Makiivka believers led by Rev. Podzolov agreed to register on the terms of the Commissioner, which prompted the Council inspector, Mr. Nikulin, to conclude that local authorities need to work not only with the leaders of religious communities, but also with individual believers, as they "are able to think independently."<sup>20</sup> Another group of 20 Pentecostals in Makiivka also opposed registration. Its leader, Rev.

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<sup>16</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.4648, оп.7, спр.5., арк.23. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F. R-4648, Inv. 7, U. 5, Fol.23].

<sup>17</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.Р-4648, оп.5, спр.298. Документы на снятие с регистрации религиозных обществ и закрытие молитвенных домов /решения исполкомов местных Советов, заключения Уполномоченных Совета, выписки из протоколов заседаний Совета/ по областям Украинской ССР / от буквы «В» до «Ж»/ за 1972 год, арк.82 [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.5, U.298. Documents for the deregistration of religious societies and the closure of houses of worship / decisions of the executive committees of local Soviets, conclusions of the Commissioners of the Council, extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Council / by regions of the Ukrainian SSR / from the letter "V" to "Zh" / for 1972., Fol.82].

<sup>18</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.Р-4648, оп.5, спр.334. Документы на снятие с регистрации религиозных обществ и закрытие молитвенных домов /решения исполкомов местных Советов, заключения Уполномоченных Совета, выписки из протоколов заседаний Совета/ по областям Украинской ССР / от буквы «В» до «Д»/ за 1973 год, арк.94. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.5, U.298. Documents for the deregistration of religious societies and the closure of houses of worship / decisions of the executive committees of local Soviets, the conclusions of the Commissioners of the Council, extracts from the minutes of the meetings of the Council / by regions of the Ukrainian SSR / from the letter "B" to "D" / for 1973, Fol.94].

<sup>19</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.Р-4648, оп.7, спр.137 Докладные записки работников аппарата Совета о результатах изучения религиозной обстановки в областях и проверке работы уполномоченных Совета, арк. 134. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.7, U.137. Memoranda of the Council staff on the results of studying the religious situation in the regions and checking the work of the Council representatives, Fol.134].

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Fol. 135.

Voloshin, informed the Commissioner that he had written a letter personally to Leonid Brezhnev with a request to repeal the legislation on cults and is now waiting for a response.<sup>21</sup>

One of the leaders of Pentecostals in the Donetsk region, Rev. Lukashov, from Zhdanov (now renamed as Mariupol) raised the issue of convening an All-Union meeting of Pentecostals<sup>22</sup> during the meeting with Chairman of the Council for Religions under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Kostiantyn Lytvyn, on December 26, 1977. Rev. Lukashov argued that many Pentecostals believe that God does not approve registration and that if there were no divisions among Pentecostals, the registration process would have been expedited. In Zhdanov, along with the registered Pentecostal community of 112 people, there was a group of neutrals (300-350 people) who sometimes attended their services and took a waiting position, and a group of Bishop Ivanov supporters (300 people) who opposed registration. The last group did not interact with the registered community.<sup>23</sup>

Soviet authorities demanded that religious leaders intensify sermons on civil issues. Rev. Lukashov also noted that Pentecostals cannot pray for specific public holidays, but pray for the well-being of the country as a whole, because in the house of prayer one should talk only about Jesus Christ.

The issue of children participation in the church service was especially painful at the time for Soviet Protestants. Rev. Lukashov noted that if children are not allowed to participate in church services, there are no prospects for legalizing their fellow believers.<sup>24</sup> As a result of this conversation, the Chairmen and staff of the Council for Religious Affairs had the impression that, of all the Pentecostal leaders of the republic, Rev. Lukashov, was the one most inclined to cooperate with the authorities.<sup>25</sup>

The Commissioner used the usual methods against the few who disagreed with the registration and the Soviet authorities' point of view. Thus, between October 1973 and December 1975, 29 Pentecostals were fined.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.Р-4648, оп.7, спр.45, арк.111. Информации, докладные записки, справки Совета, представленные в правительственные и партийные органы УССР о религиозной обстановке, о положении и деятельности религиозных объединений в республике, арк.111. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.7, U.45. Information, memoranda, certificates of the Council submitted to the government and party bodies of the Ukrainian SSR on the religious situation, on the status and activities of religious associations in the republic, Fol.111].

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., fol.112.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.4648, оп.7, спр.49, арк.113. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.7, U.49, Fol.113].

<sup>26</sup> ЦДАВО, ф.4648, оп.7, спр.5., арк.24-25. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F. R-4648, Inv. 7, U. 5, Fol.24-25].

During collapse of the Soviet Union in 1985-1991, despite the process of partial liberalization in the religious life, the line towards uniting Baptists and Pentecostals remained a part of the agenda. Thus, during the meeting of the Pentecostal community of Slovyansk, its presbyter, Vasyl Zabarenko, was elected to the regional presbytery council in order to strengthen the efforts aimed at achieving unity with the Pentecostals communities that are not part of the Baptists community.<sup>27</sup> As Russian historians, Nadezhda Beliakova and Vera Kliueva, concluded: "The Pentecostal movement, despite its having been placed beyond the limits of legality by the state and subordinated to the Baptist leadership within the Soviet evangelical union, displayed amazing vitality and even a drive to expand."<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus, during the period from the mid-1960s and early 1990s, Seventh-day Adventist communities in the Donetsk region established relatively stable relations with the Commissioner for Religious Affairs in the region. The Commissioner did not interfere with the registration of Adventist communities and personally assisted in resolving legal issues regarding Adventists' observance of the Saturday rest. One of the causes of such an attitude was that the Commissioner could give Adventists the green light to help them root out Reformed Adventist communities, which were in opposition to Soviet state. Representatives of the registered communities of the SDA were equally loyal towards the Commissioner. The member of the Donetsk community of SDA, Mr. Ignatov, declared in his speech in 1976: "We need to ask God for peace on our planet and ask the Lord to bless the noble efforts of our Government for supporting peace in general." A special model of relations was established for the Pentecostals in the era of "developed socialism" (or so called Stagnation) in 1965-1985. On the one hand, the state, represented by the Commissioner, tried to continue the process of unification of their communities with the Baptists. On the other hand, in the early 1970s, the authorities implicitly agreed to legalize Pentecostals' activities. At the same time, some regional Pentecostal groups opposed the Soviet government. Despite their generally small size, they represented a real threat to the overall picture of the Pentecostals' conformist policy towards the regional commissioner in Zhdanov (Mariupol nowadays). The fact that the government regarded the activities of Evangelical Christians as a separate issue is confirmed by regional seminars for secretaries and employees of executive committees of

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<sup>27</sup> ЦДАБО, ф.Р-4648, оп.7, спр.304, арк.66. [Central State Archives of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine, F.R-4648, Inv.7, U.370, Fol.66].

<sup>28</sup> Nadezhda Beliakova and Vera Kliueva. *Leadership, communication, and conflicts among evangelicals: analysis of relations in religious communities in the late USSR*. (Canadian Slavonic Papers. 2019. 61-1), p.16.

local councils on practical work with Pentecostals, conducted in 1983 under supervision of the Commissioner Leonid Serpilin. Despite some episodes of liberalization of the Soviet religious policy, on the whole its character remained clearly atheistic, directed against the activity of religious communities. This state of affairs remained until 1988, when real Gorbachov's liberalization during Perestroika began.

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